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S E C R E T AMMAN 000861

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2013

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SUBJECT: SAUDIS TELL KING ABDULLAH THEY WILL JOIN OIL DEAL;
JORDAN WILL ASK FOR REIMBURSEMENT FOR IRAQ HUMANITARIAN
RELIEF COSTS

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

CP ABDULLAH MAKES FUZZY COMMITMENT TO SUPPLY OIL TO JORDAN

1. (S) King Abdullah told the Ambassador and PolCouns February 5 that Saudi CP Abdullah confirmed to him during his February 4 visit to Saudi Arabia that the Saudis are prepared to provide Jordan with oil in the event of a cutoff in supplies from Iraq. The King said the oil would come through Yanbo, and that the Saudis were "seeking an increased commitment from Kuwait and the UAE" on the oil deal. CP Abdullah told the King he wants to see "50 - 50, plus 50 from Saudi Arabia" (presumably meaning provision of 50,000 bpd to Jordan from each of the three countries). The King commented, however, that there was "no practical conversation about the details" of the possible oil deliveries on either price or specific delivery mechanism. In a separate conversation February 6, Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb told the Ambassador that Saudi Oil Minister Naimi told him that Jordan could send a ship to Yanbo and get Saudi oil "on 24 hours notice." Abul Ragheb understood from the Saudis that such an arrangement would last for three months "assuming that oil shipments from Iraq will come back." "I know that I am now getting my oil," he concluded.

2. (S) In a separate conversation with Ambassador and PolCouns February 5, Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher repeated the substance of the King's remarks. Based on the Jordanians' conversations with the CP, Muasher said, "things seem to be going well" with the Saudis on oil. "The Crown Prince told us 'we will cover your needs,' but no one has yet given us the terms. We think they will be favorable, but we don't know the final quantities or the price." He noted that Jordanian Energy Minister Mohammad Bataineh had recently met with the Saudi, UAE, and Kuwaiti oil ministers in Abu Dhabi, "and the UAE Minister didn't even know about the deal." Muasher said he had called UAE MinState for Foreign Affairs Prince Hamdan later to confirm that the deal was still on the table, and Hamdan said he would make sure his oil minister was brought into the loop.

3. (S) PM Abul Ragheb said that he was also looking at the possibility that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (or Saudi Arabia alone) could supply all of Jordan's oil needs, and that the UAE (or the UAE and Kuwait) would make a monetary contribution in lieu of actual petroleum. Abul Ragheb said he would go to Abu Dhabi and Kuwait after the Eid to try to work out details of such an arrangement (although he also said during another part of the conversation that GID Director Saad Kheir was in charge of this deal).

IRAQ RELIEF EFFORTS: "WE NEED TO GET BACK EVERY PENNY"

4. (C) Ambassador and PolCouns briefed the King and Muasher on the visit of the PRM/OFDA Humanitarian Planning Team, emphasizing the team's desire to work out mechanisms to increase coordination between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), the U.S. military, UN agencies, and NGOs in the event of war. Muasher and the King welcomed the news of a USD 15m grant to UN agencies and hoped this would permit UNHCR to reimburse some of the GOJ's costs associated with possible flows of refugees and/or third country nationals into and through Jordan. Noting that Jordan got almost no international assistance to cover its refugee/TCN costs during the 1990-91 Gulf War, Muasher quipped "We need to get back every penny we spend. If UNHCR can pay, fine. If they don't pay, we will ask you (the USG)."

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